

Contend Earnestly For the Faith Which Was Once For All Handed Down to the Saints

An Expository Study of the **Epistle of Jude**

Chapter 10- The Error of Balaam **Jude 11**

111 The Error of Balaam- Part 4

WOSM Wednesday 04/09/08

Welcome again my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing in our Journey through the Epistle of Jude and today I want to see what Jude meant when he pronounced an everlasting and eternal condemnation upon the heretics who bring in false doctrine and ungodly teaching into the House of God. So let's read verse 11 of Jude again together:

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Now on our last broadcast, we were looking at how the Error of Balaam has caused the Church to compromise the integrity of the Gospel. Now please know that there is nothing inherently wrong with the Church growing as big as God desires it to be as long as the growth is real and not the invention of Man and not at the expense of Truth. But whether the Church is large or small is not up to us- that is God's business- our job is to be faithful regardless of how many souls are in our charge.

When the Lord builds a Church, those who are members of that Church will be saved and they will actually walk with God. When God builds a Church the leadership of that Church will be firm in the conviction that growth should be the result of people being convicted of sin through the preaching of the Gospel and by experiencing the miracle of the new birth- not by employing carnal, worldly, or human methods and dulling the edge of the sword so as not to offend the lukewarm and the backslid.

The people in that Church will honor God and they will exalt Jesus Christ and they will be so happy to submit to the authority of God's Word.

But when the goal of the Church is to simply grow big at any cost; when the goal is to compete with other Churches- then a decision must be made as to how to get large. Gaining people by muffling the Gospel; growing large at the expense of Truth; getting big as the result of hiding or dulling the edge of the sword will guarantee that the people in that Church will be lukewarm at best and lost at worst.

In order to reach the goal of becoming large at any cost- you must attract people by using other means besides the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. The Pastor of such a Church must rely on his personality; his charisma; his cleverness or use some other carnal, human technique to feed the people. In that kind of setting- it is certain that the Pastor will never be able to both preach God's Word and stay popular.

The ability to artificially manipulate and draw a crowd will work for a season. But sooner or later the Pastor will run into situations that require him to either choose to be faithful to God or he will have to continue down the road of simply being popular. Those who come will have to be presented with the Gospel of Jesus Christ sooner or later- or else they have to be placated with some other message.

All of this is running after the error of Balaam. Balaam chose to do this very thing. He was paid to speak a prophecy against the children of Israel. He was offered money to bring forth a word that did not come from God. He was hired to speak a word that his supporters wanted to hear.

Beloved, this will happen at some point in time to every man in ministry. At some point- he will be offered money to compromise his message. He will be offered a very attractive position if only he will speak certain words or else, he will be offered a position if only he will *not* speak certain words. A man of God will be offered prestige; power; authority; or some other form of gain if only he will dance to the tune of those who desire to pay him. This is what is called being "bought" and every man in ministry will be confronted with this at some point in his ministry.

The offer to buy the preacher may come from a particular person who holds great influence in the Church. It may come from the

deacon board or the elder board. It may come from the denominational headquarters- it may even come from outside the Church- but it *will* come from *somewhere* and it will be a real offer to purchase the heart and soul of the Pastor.

It may come as an offer that at first appears to be a wonderful opportunity or it may come as a threat. It may come as an ultimatum or as an honest request- but anytime anyone is trying to dull the edge of the sword; anytime anyone is trying to muzzle the ox; anytime anyone is trying to compromise the Gospel- the Error of Balaam is alive and well and working in that Church. Jude tells us here to beware of this.

The people who actually offer the money; or those who make the threat; or those who offer the opportunity do not want to be known. They do not desire to be visible. They do not want visible power- no, they want to be the power *behind* the power. They seek to do what they do even as Jezebel sought to control King Ahab- all to slay the true prophet.

So, the answer to this problem is not to be brave or to even be courageous- the answer is for the Pastor to simply never put himself in a position to be for sale. You see, dear friends, the only way that the devil can enter into your heart is because you leave the door open. The only way that the evil one can ride your back is because your back is bent; and the only way that the error of Balaam can exist and preachers can be bought is because they are for sale.

But when the Pastor is already bought and paid for by the Blood of Jesus Christ- he can't be bought- no matter what the price- because he is no longer for sale. This bought and paid for minister will reject any offer to compromise God's Word. He will turn down any attempt to be ashamed of the Gospel; and he will quickly condemn any movement in the Church to run after the error of Balaam.

The error of Balaam occurs when men are doing what is right in their *own* eyes and are jockeying for power and control and when men seek after reward for doing God's service. When those things are allowed to exist within a Church- the potential exists for the error of Balaam to be present. But when all of those things are systematically eliminated through submission to the authority of Scripture- then most of the opportunity that heretics have of running after the error of Balaam in the Church is eliminated.

You see, I have no authority at all in my Church. I have no power to command anyone to do anything. The power and the authority in my Church resides in the Word of God. The Board of Elders of my Church have wisely elevated Scripture to be both the Mouth of God and the Voice of God. People do not have to wait for me to speak to hear from God. They can study God's Word and hear from God anytime of the day or night. We hear from God through God's Word; we get direction from God through His Word; we are taught the ways of God through His Word. The Elders of my Church have wisely promoted a culture of repentance and a philosophy of ministry that is Scripturally centered and God honoring which has eliminated almost any chance for the way of Cain; the error of Balaam; or the gainsaying of Korah to exist. This is so important if you plan on being in ministry for very long.

That doesn't mean that we are perfect or that we have arrived- not at all- we struggle over many, many things. But the point that I am making is that if you realize that the potential for evil to come into your Church exists- then you can work real hard to prevent them from ever occurring.

For example- no one has the power to speak out of his own wisdom or to articulate his own theology or doctrine in my Church. All Doctrine and Theology must be Sola Scriptura and all preaching must be from the Bible. This puts heretics and deceivers on notice right from jump street that they have very little room to do anything in my Church besides repent and be saved.

Brothers and sisters, we must realize that materialism and spiritual competition is destroying the Church in America and it puts up false comparisons that are used to judge or measure every ministry.

In the mind set of far too many today- something must be wrong with a ministry that is small. We deem something to be wrong with the Church that is not constantly knocking walls out of the Sanctuary to make room for all the people. The logic goes- if they were doing right- they would grow.

Now while I will agree that there is some truth to that statement- it is not a universal rule of measurement. And I will also say that we live in a time where there are *many* Churches that are not

doing right, and their numbers are actually *decreasing* and this is a good thing.

But we must always remember that while we are definitely responsible for what we do and what we preach and what we say and what we teach and what we sing and how we live and how we conduct ministry- we are not responsible for the *results* of our ministry. That is God's business. How large or how small our Churches are is God's business; how many souls are saved is God's business; and how many people come into right relationship with God through our efforts is God's business.

Our job is to faithfully do God's Work in God's way and leave the results up to God. We are to faithfully preach God's Word and we are to love the sheep and tend to God's flock if everybody agrees with us and if everybody loves us and we are enormously popular and if our Church is large and prosperous. But we are to also faithfully preach God's Word and tend to God's Sheep and love God's people if no one agrees with us and if no one gets saved and if we are ostracized; and if we are persecuted and hated and reviled and made to be a fool.

The Pastor should spend just as much time studying God's Word and preparing his sermon if he is to speak to 10,000 people or if he is to speak to 11. The man that has 5,000 members in his Church is not necessarily any more obedient or any more faithful or any more saved or doing anything more right than the man who leads 120 souls. God is not honoring the mega Church more than He is honoring the small church and we must be real careful that we don't judge success by numbers and wealth rather than by faithfulness and obedience.

The logic of our modern American culture says that if a ministry was doing what God wanted them to do- they would be blessed- and being blessed is always defined as being big and having lots of stuff and tons of money and being enormously popular.

But is that comparison true? Is this the Biblical pattern for ministry? Let's see.

The first preacher in the Bible was a man named Noah. We read about Noah in **Genesis 6**. In that chapter, the Bible says several interesting things about this man. The Word of God says that he was a preacher of righteousness. The Bible also says that Noah found grace in the Eyes of the Lord. The Bible further states that God used Noah to build an ark. It even tells us that Noah preached

righteousness for 120 years.

May we agree that Noah was faithful to God? May we also agree that Noah was obedient to what God told him to do? May we also agree that Noah was not in rebellion to God but was doing God's Will in the earth?

Well then, by using the modern American Church's standard of Church Growth, Noah's Church must have been the first mega-Church, right? I mean Noah must have had a world-wide ministry with book sales and television appearances, right? Wrong. Noah was mocked; he was rejected; he was ridiculed for the entire duration of his faithful service to God. Well maybe Noah wasn't all that popular, but at least he could take comfort in the knowledge that his huge mega church valued his faithfulness to God, right? Wrong again. How big was Noah's Church? Eight souls- and all eight were members of his immediate family, so I don't really know if that counts because back then, sons and son-in-laws really didn't have much choice- they just did what the father said to do.

So even though Noah was absolutely faithful to God; even though Jesus referred to Noah when he talked about His return to this earth; even though Noah was absolutely doing God's perfect will in the earth- according to the modern standard of measuring successful churches- Noah would have been considered an abject failure and a delegation from the local ministerial association would have gone to poor old Noah to try to get him to change his approach to preaching so he could get more people in his Church.

The contrast between what the Bible says about Noah and what we view today as successful is the measurement of just how much influence the error of Balaam has had in our thinking and in our Churches. To think for one minute that Noah was not blessed by God simply because Noah did not measure up to some carnal, Babylonian standard of success does not reflect at all on Noah—but it does show us just how far we have fallen.

I tell you that we must be careful that we do not set a standard of Church success that is based on the error of Balaam and not based in God's Word. Success in God is not measured in numbers or money or power or influence. Those are the things that impress unsaved, unregenerated and lukewarm people. Success in God is measured in ancient and forgotten things like faithfulness and

obedience and in service and in consistent dedication to that which God has required and we need to return to those things, and we need to once again value those things and we need to once again measure success by those things and we need to all earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Well, I've got to stop right here. But please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our Journey through the Epistle of **Jude**. May God help us all.

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